



ROWLEY IS ONE OF THE TOWNS IN ESSEX COUNTY KNOW FOR HAVING MANY ANTIQUE STORES.

ROWLEY: HISTORIC HIDEAWAY ON THE NORTH SHORE

By Arden Miller, CZM

TOWN HALL, ROWLEY.



Led by Reverend Ezekiel Rogers from St. Peter's Church of Rowley, Yorkshire, England in the fall of 1638, 20 adventurous British families boarded the sailing vessel *John of London* for what were then known as "the colonies." (A side note of interest—perhaps only of interest to those interested in the history of print and typography—this ship was also transporting the first

printing press to be used in the United States.) A few weeks later, the printing press, and the families, safely landed on the shores of what is now Salem, Massachusetts. The printing press was moved to Cambridge and published many early works—including those of Benjamin Franklin—that would be coveted by today's bibliophiles and fans of *Antiques Road Show*. The families settled closer to their landing spot, in an area 32 miles from Boston, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Merrimack River. People took to calling this township "Mr. Ezekiel Roger's Plantation,"

until its official incorporation on September 4, 1639 when, in the language of the day, it was declared that "Mr. Ezekiel Roger's Plantation Shalbee Called Rowley, Massachusetts."

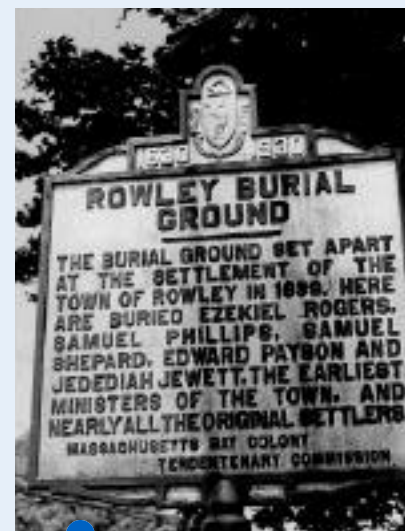
As one of the five communities within the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Rowley is known locally as part of the "Great Marsh," so named as the ACEC boasts 12,800 salt marsh acres—the largest contiguous area of marsh north of Long Island, New York. Originally, the hay from the Rowley portions of the salt marsh was used by settlers for thatching roofs and cattle feed. While the market for hay-thatched roofs isn't what it once was, the hay continues to serve Rowley well by providing flood control and serving as a natural filter for contaminants from upland discharge and urban runoff, and the marshes, beautiful throughout the year, can be accessed for boating.

In 2002, Rowley is home to more than

5,000 people. As part of Essex County—an area given the lofty moniker "The Most Historic County of America"¹—Rowley is the northeastern-most town in Massachusetts. Its 19 square miles are home to a number of historic sights including Jewel Mill. Originally called Pearson Mill, it has the distinction of being the oldest continuously operating water mill in the United States and, due to its original purpose of combing and spinning wool, Rowley is known as the birthplace of the American wool industry. Also, the Old Stone Arch Bridge, erected in 1643, still stands.

Other vestiges of Rowley's venerable past include "Old Nancy," a cannon used during the American Revolution, a Civil War Monument, an original cobbler's shop from 1830, and the Rowley Burial Ground where Reverend Rogers, and the original members of his "plantation" are laid to rest.

¹Standard History of Essex County, Massachusetts, Jewett & Co., 1878



THE ROWLEY BURIAL GROUND IS THE FINAL RESTING PLACE FOR MANY HISTORIC FIGURES.

THREE GENERATIONS OF ROWLEY CLAMMERS.

photo (left) courtesy of James Gundstrom - all others: Arden Miller



Bordered by Boxford and Georgetown on the west, Newbury on the north, Ipswich on the south, and the Plum Island River on the east, Rowley is less than 10 miles from the New Hampshire border. For the antique lovers, Sundays in the summertime mean the outdoor antique flea market at Todd's Farm Antiques is open for business and bargains (the devotees claim it's best to get there around 6 a.m. for the *very* best bargains!).

An anonymous writer of the times when people used phrases like "green hillocks"

wrote of Rowley:

"It is one of the pleasantest towns in Essex County... In the summer season, it is hardly possible to go over the green hillocks...or by the sparkling brooks fringed with luxuriant grass and flowers...without wishing that one had been born in Rowley... To be born in such a place...and to sleep at last in the same dust with the good old fathers of olden times, were enough to fill the cup of mortal happiness full."

Indeed...

